

**Research Proposal**  
**A Quantitative Analysis of**  
**Pikes Peak Family Connections**

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# Brief Report of Findings

## Part 1 - Overall Program Performance

Quick Stats: Total of 140 parents completed classes started in 2002.

**Question #1:** In 2002, did parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in Construct 1, Appropriate Parental Expectations?

**Answer:** Most certainly. In fact, highly statistically significant changes (at the .001 level) were evident between pre and post testing. The mean scores rose from 5.5 to 6.8.

**Question #2:** In 2002, did parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in Construct 2, Demonstrating Empathy Towards Children's Needs?

**Answer:** Again, highly statistically significant changes (at the .001 level) were evident between pre and post testing. The mean scores rose from 5.3 to 6.7.

**Question #3:** In 2002, did parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in Construct 3, Alternatives to the Use of Corporal Punishment?

**Answer:** Again, highly statistically significant changes (at the .001 level) were evident between pre and post testing. The mean scores rose from 5.4 to 7.1.

**Question #4:** In 2002, did parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in Construct 4, Avoiding Reversing Parent-Child Family Roles?

**Answer:** Again, highly statistically significant changes (at the .001 level) were evident between pre and post testing. The mean scores rose from 5.5 to 6.8.

**Question #5:** In 2002, did parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in Construct 5, Valuing Children's Will and Independence

**Answer:** Again, highly statistically significant changes (at the .001 level) were evident between pre and post testing. The mean scores rose from 5.3 to 6.7.

**Question #6:** In 2002, did parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in their scores on the Nurturing Quiz?

**Answer:** Yes. Once again, highly statistically significant changes (at the .001 level) were evident between pre and post testing. Parent attitudes moved significantly up the continuum on this test meant to measure their knowledge of nurturing parenting practices. The test is scaled from 1 to 24. Glancing at the data shows us that the parent's average score rose from 18.3 to 21.4.

### What the AAPI-2 Constructs Measure

AAPI #1 - Appropriate Parental Expectations  
AAPI #2 - Demonstrating Empathy Towards Children's Needs  
AAPI #3 - Alternatives to the Use of Corporal Punishment  
AAPI #4 - Avoiding Reversing Parent-Child Family Roles  
AAPI #5 - Valuing Children's Will and Independence  
Nurturing Quiz - Knowledge of Nurturing Parenting Practices

## Part 2 - Multicultural Competence

### GENDER

Quick stats: 56 males (39.4%) and 86 females (60.6%)

**Question #1:** Were there significant differences in parenting attitudes between male and female parents before taking the classes?

**Answer:** Generally speaking, significant differences were not present. A look at the differences in mean scores shows that the pretest scores for men in constructs 1, 2, 3 and 4 were higher than those of women, while the scores for construct 5 and the Nurturing Quiz were higher for women. (See Appendix A). Though these differences were present, they were only statistically significant for construct 1: Appropriate Parental Expectations where men had higher (better) starting scores (at the .05 level). Taken in context of the other statistically insignificant results though, it is fair to say that differences were not marked. These findings differ from the norm, where male participants typically score significantly lower than women.

**Question #2:** Did gender affect the degree of improvement from pre and post testing?

**Answer:** The results are mixed. They indicate that for constructs 1 (Appropriate Parental Expectations) and 5 (Valuing Children's Will and Independence), statistically significant differences (at the .05 levels) existed between males and

**Question #2: Did educational levels affect the degree of improvement from pre and post testing?**

**Answer:** No. Except for construct 4, none of the other constructs or the Nurturing Quiz showed statistically significant difference between educational levels at the pre and post test levels. Generally educational level did not have an impact on *degree* of improvement then, indicating that in this area PFFC staff was likely teaching with a good overall degree of multicultural sensitivity. Groups improved at similar rates.

These results differed from Bavolek's (2001) large scale study. He found that education was a predicting factor for pre and test scores. Those completing higher degrees of education scored significantly higher in both. However, our results were similar with his for question three; all education levels showed statistically significant improvements even if their scores did not level out.

**REASON FOR PARTICIPATION**

Quick Stats: 34 Voluntary (23.9%) and 105 System Ordered or Recommended (73.9%)

**Question #1: Were there significant differences in parenting attitudes based on reasons for participation?**

**Answer:** No. Without exception, there were not statistically significant differences (at the .05 level) between reasons for participation at the pre test level. This indicates that reason for participation had nearly negligible impacts on parenting attitudes for those participating in the program.

**Question #2: Did reasons for participation affect the degree of improvement from pre and post testing?**

**Answer:** No. In none of the constructs did reasons for participation have an impact on *degree* of improvement, indicating that in this area PFFC staff was likely teaching with a good overall degree of equality. Groups improved at similar rates.

**SUMMARY**

We can conclude that overall, parents participating in the program during the 2002 year made highly statistically significant changes with regards to their attitudes and knowledge about parenting. We can also conclude that the staff taught the program in multiculturally sensitive fashion; all groups (with a minor exception in gender) showed improved at similar degrees in the program.

**LIMITATIONS**

Though many limitations give reason to temper the results of the findings, three important ones should be noted: 1) The study didn't account for drop-out rates among various groups. If for instance, Hispanic participants dropped out at much higher levels than Whites, this would indicate a possible need to change the way services are provided to Hispanic participants. 2) The results are not generalizable to the population. For example, we could not conclude that the Nurturing scores of the sixteen Black participants who completed the program are representative of the wider Colorado Springs population. 3) The study didn't account for cross-variable contamination. For example, if the men served were abused as children at higher rates than women, this could lead to a skewing of their scores.

**OTHER STATS NOT ANALYZED**

**Class Age Group:** 80 parents of 0-5 y.o.s (56.3%), and 62 parents of 4-12 y.o.s (43.7%)

**Ages of Parents:** 20 at 17-21 (14.1%), 37 at 22-26 (26.1%), 25 at 27-31 (17.6%), 27 at 32-36 (19.0%), 18 at 37-41 (12.7%), 7 at 42-26 (4.9%), 3 at 47-51 (2.1%), 2 at 52-56 (1.4%)

**Self Reported History of Drug or Alcohol Abuse:** 21 said Yes (14.8%), 103 said No (72.5%), and 17 said Yes by an Immediate Family Member (12.0%). 1 person did not answer.

**Self Reported History of Being Abused as a Child:** 59 said Yes (41.5%), 63 said No (44.4%), and 14 were Not Sure (9.9%). 6 people did not answer.

**Self Reported History of Domestic Violence Offence:** 22 said Yes (15.5%), 74 said No (52.1%), and 4 were Not Sure (2.8%). 42 people did not answer.

**Self Reported History of Domestic Violence Victimization:** 32 said Yes (22.5%), 67 said No (47.2%) and 2 were Not Sure (1.4%). 41 people did not answer.

females. In both instances it was the scores of the men that showed greater improvements than women. This to say, for these two constructs, PPFC seems to have done a better job teaching male parents than female parents. For the remaining constructs and the Nurturing Quiz, statistical significance was not present; PPFC seems to have taught these concepts to male and female parents at similar levels.

#### **RACE**

Quick Stats: 98 White (69%), 16 Hispanic (11.3%), 15 Black (10.6%), 4 American Indian (2.8%) and 5 Other (3.5%)

**Question #1: Were there significant differences in parenting attitudes between racial categories before taking the classes?**

**Answer:** Yes. In 4 of the 5 constructs, revealed statistically significant differences (at the .05 level) between pre test scores of different racial groups. As Bavolek notes in his much more comprehensive study of a similar question, "Traditions, lifestyles, folklore, and history all combine to lay the groundwork for the way parents of different racial and cultural backgrounds raise their children" (2001, p. 5). The Nurturing Quiz and Construct 3 (Alternatives to Use of Corporal Punishment) showed no significant difference. I did not run this test to see if there were significant differences between each category (i.e. to test for differences between Whites and Hispanics). So to I cannot say, with the weight of proper statistical significant which racial categories, were higher than others. Briefly examining the differences in mean scores though, in almost every category, those identifying themselves as White, American Indian and Other, scored relatively similarly. And their scores were generally higher than the scores of the categories Black and Hispanic (whose scores seemed relatively similar).

**Question #2: Did race affect the degree of improvement from pre and post testing?**

**Answer:** No. Except for construct 5 (Valuing Children's Will and Independence), none of the other constructs or the Nurturing Quiz showed statistically significant difference between racial groups at the pre and post test levels. Generally race did not have an impact on *degree* of improvement then, indicating that in this area PPFC staff was likely teaching with a good overall degree of multicultural sensitivity. As a whole, the different groups improved at similar rates. Follow-up question: What would the results show if we were to break the test down to look at each racial category individually? This would give a clearer picture as to how PPFC staff worked with each racial category instead of just giving the generally positive results of the test I ran.

#### **ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME**

Quick Stats: 20 at Under \$5000 (14.1%), 8 at \$5000-\$8000 (5.6%), 15 at \$8000 to \$12000 (10.6%), 12 at \$12000 to \$15000 (8.5%), 18 at \$15000 to \$20000 (12.7%), 32 at Over \$20000 (22.5%), and 31 were Not Sure (21.8%)

**Question #1: Were there significant differences in parenting attitudes between levels of family income before taking the classes?**

**Answer:** Yes and No. For 3 of the constructs (1, 2, and 4), there were significant differences (at the .05 level). For 2 constructs (3 and 5) and for the Nurturing Quiz, there were no significant differences. We can say then that income did have some impact on scoring, though it's influence was not universal. In all cases, those reporting higher incomes scored better.

**Question #2: Did family income affect the degree of improvement from pre and post testing?**

**Answer:** No. None of the 5 constructs or the Nurturing Quiz showed statistically significant difference between family income groups at the pre and post test levels. Generally family income did not have an impact on *degree* of improvement then, indicating that PPFC staff was likely teaching in this area with a good overall degree of multicultural sensitivity. Groups improved at similar rates.

Each of the findings for these questions were similar to the findings of Bavolek (2001) in his large scale study. Family income levels did have an impact on starting (with higher income levels doing better). But all groups still showed significant improvement through the course of the class.

#### **EDUCATIONAL LEVEL**

Quick Stats: 33 with No G.E.D. or Diploma (23.2%), 62 with a G.E.D. or Diploma (43.7%), 31 with Some Higher Ed. (21.8%), and 12 who Completed Higher Ed. (8.5%)

**Question #1: Were there significant differences in parenting attitudes between educational levels before taking the classes?**

**Answer:** No. With the exception of construct 4, there were not statistically significant differences (at the .05 level) between education levels at the pre test level. This indicates that education had nearly negligible impacts on parenting attitudes for those participating in the program. A look at the differences in means indicates that higher levels of education scored generally higher than lower educational levels. But the differences were slight enough that we cannot rule out chance as the cause for this stratification. (I.e. we could not reject the null hypothesis).

## **Program Description**

### *Brief Overview*

The formal mission statement of Pikes Peak Family Connections (PPFC) is “to strengthen safe, healthy relationships between parents and their children while preventing child abuse.” Informally, several staff described the agency’s mission as “the treatment and prevention of child abuse in El Paso County.” The underlying assumption of the program is that families possessing strong, healthy relationships, that don’t use violence, result in strong, healthy, and safe communities. On the flip side, much of the weakness and risk in the community is a consequence of children who have been abused, neglected or abandoned.

To meet its broad mission, Pikes Peak Family Connections has developed a multi-pronged approach. The agency offers the community Nurturing Parenting class designed to educate parents on how to raise healthy children without resorting to violence. It provides a Grandparent Support Group for grandparents raising their grandchildren. It heads up several public awareness programs, including a Child Abuse Awareness rally, a “Never Never Never Hurt a Child” bumper sticker program, and an advertising campaign using public service announcements on the radio and television. It is developing an emergency respite nursery (KPC Kid’ Place) for children at risk of maltreatment. Parents needing a hand will be able to place their children for up to three days without charge. It has formally collaborated with numerous agencies “to promote a seamless array of support services to families at risk” (2002, Mission Worksheet, p. 1). It provides case management and referral services. Finally, it participates in efforts to encourage family-centered legislation.

For purposes of my research project, I will be looking solely at the Nurturing Parenting Program. The program is a standardized, nationally used program that offers a sixteen-week

class designed to increase parental nurturing behaviors and decrease abusive behaviors. The classes are described as psycho-educational, being based in the idea that changing parents ideas about parenting will lead to a change in their parenting behavior. Specifically, five constructs are targeted during the teaching: 1) the importance of parental empathy, 2) avoiding role reversals between parents and children (i.e. parents not looking to kids to meet their needs), 3) having a wide variety of discipline strategies without needing to resort to corporal punishment, 4) having appropriate developmental expectations, and 5) valuing children's power and independence (i.e. helping them learn to make their own wise choices). The *Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory – 2 (AAPI-2)* is a validated scale developed by Dr. Stephen Bavolek, author and director of the Nurturing Parenting Programs. Its purpose is to measure parents' attitudes around these five constructs before and after the sixteen-week program. Learning takes place in the context of group experiential activities and discussions, home practice readings and assignments, and direct input from staff as they observe parent-child interactions. The children birth to age 12 participate in concurrent classes with a parallel curriculum.

### **The Object of My Research Study**

In several grants, PPFC has set the following goal: “As demonstrated by pre/post tests, 90% of all parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes will demonstrate statistically significant improvement in three out of five constructs taught in the program as measured by AAPI-2” (Tony Grampas Grant Application, 2002, p. 9). Though PPFC administers several types of tests to parents and children, the AAPI-2 offers the most relevant information to outside stakeholders (and to itself as an organization) on whether or not the parents have changed as a result of the intervention. The test purports to measure: Do parents in fact have more nurturing, less abusive attitudes about parenting?

No one is currently slated to complete the task of measuring the 2002 AAPI-2 test results. It provides a perfect opportunity for me to meet the agency's need for grant purposes and for internal agency purposes. The chief research question I will pursue then comes directly from the grant. *In 2002, did 90% of the parents completing the Nurturing Parenting classes demonstrate statistically significant improvement in three out of five constructs taught in the program as measured by the AAPI-2?*

In addition to answering this, I propose to expand the analysis of the AAPI-2 scores in two ways. The first is to examine whether the agency as a whole taught certain constructs more completely than others. I.e., Did parents learn the importance of avoiding role reversals (Construct 2), but fail to learn developmentally appropriate expectations (Construct 4)? I will then focus this same analysis on the performance of each class facilitator. Which constructs does this worker excel in teaching (if any) and with which constructs do they struggle (if any)? The facilitators have expressed a desire in receiving this feedback. *Looking at the program as a whole, in 2002 which specific constructs showed statistically significant improvement and which did not? Looking at each facilitator, in their 2002 classes, which constructs showed statistically significant improvement, and which did not?*

The second way in which I will expand the study of the AAPI-2 scores is to examine the multi-cultural competency of PPFC's delivery of the Nurturing Program. Many staff members expressed high levels of interest in understanding the answer to this question. I plan on examining the rates of AAPI-2 scores improved within the following groups: 1) Caucasians, African Americans and Latinos (The agency did not serve a significant enough number of other racial/ethnic populations to justify their study.) 2) males and females, and 3) differing educational backgrounds—high school diploma (or equivalent) and higher versus no diploma. Did certain

groups show higher degrees of change than other groups? Related, I will also examine whether any patterning existed in the types of people who dropped out of the class. Was any group overrepresented in the drop-out rates? The question is: *Do the AAPI-2 scores indicate that certain population groups gained more from the program than other groups?* A related question will look at those who don't complete the program. I will examine: *Do the scores of those who drop the program differ significantly from the same pre-test scores of those who wind up finishing? Are there any distinctive characteristics about the drop out populations (i.e. race, gender, education)?* If distinctive characteristics do exist, this might also contribute to the discussion of multicultural competency.

Examining this question of multicultural competence will bring the study into some controversial arenas. A quick glance at the data could be misleading. For example, would a higher dropout rate of men versus women (I use it only as an theoretical example) indicate that the staff was providing services in ways that were exclusionary towards men? The implication would be that the staff would need to find ways of improving their competence in retaining male participants. But might it not also indicate that men are less interested in improving parenting skills? Or perhaps some sort of external factor would explain the difference? One could imagine that the data that might come out would be even more sensitive when examining differences between racial/ethnic groups. The question of *interpretation* of the data would be extremely complex and ethically charged. Without interpreting the data though, studying it would risk futility. What good is it to know that men (or one racial/ethnic group or those with a lower education) dropped out at a higher rate if the reasons for this occurring are unclear?

As I anticipate carrying out the research proposal the difficulty of answering the question of multicultural competence adequately is daunting. Examining some of these difficulties in light



of current literature will certainly be of help. In the end though, it may be that the question of the reasons for disparities remains unanswered. The only thing I might offer the staff are some suggestions on how to improve their level of multicultural competence, not knowing if their current practice is or is not achieving a good degree of multicultural sensitivity. My hope would be that a pursuit of the question, whether or not it can be definitively answered, would encourage more thoughtful, multi-culturally sensitive practice.

### **Literature Review**

#### *The Impetus for Parenting Classes*

Child abuse and neglect is a serious issue in America. The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (1998) notes that an average of three children are killed each day in the United States. Those who survive abuse exhibit much higher degrees of anti-social and criminal behavior—causing an increased risk and cost to the rest of society (Bavolek, 2002; Jenkins and Smith, 1991).

The development of the Nurturing Program noted a strong correlation between the presence of abusive *attitudes* and abusive *actions* in parents (Bavolek, 2001, p. 1). As the Nurturing Program takes this Cognitive Therapy type approach, attempting to change specific parental attitudes, I examined the success rate of two programs taking similar approaches: the Healthy Start Program, and the Incredible Years Program. (None of the three approaches follow Cognitive Therapy principles strictly. The targeting of specific attitudes unifies each of their purposes). Parents who abuse their children often believe their practices to be the best methods. Both programs have been able to demonstrate a cognitive restructuring approach significantly decreases the abusive actions of parents (Reid, Webster-Stratton & Beauchaine, 2001; Bugnetal, D., Ellerson, P., Lin, E., Rainey, B., Kokotovic, A. O'Hara, N., 2002.) Other studies have

corroborated the significant impacts a Cognitive approach can have decreasing the incidence of abuse (Michalcio & Solomon, 2002, Hoeltje, Zubrick, Silburn & Garton, 1996). If parents are taught that a nurturing style is more effective than an abusive one, they often begin to act in more nurturing ways.

### *The Development of the Five Constructs of the Nurturing Program*

But what specifically are nurturing behaviors and attitudes? What are abusive ones? Throughout the past thirty years, researchers have been working to answer this question. Belsky (1984) has developed perhaps one of the most famous models that attempt to predict the relationship between parenting style and the behavior of children. His studies indicate that parents who report having higher rates of abusive or neglectful attitudes “tend to report more child behavior problems” (Michalcio, Soloman, 2002, p. 401). Outside observers, such as teachers or helping professionals, also noted an increase in behavior problems correlating with a higher rate of abuse or neglectful parental styles (Michalcio, Soloman, 2002, p. 402). The harsher parents are, the more troubled their children seem to be. The categories Belsky developed have been successfully tested as being valid indicators of child behavior problems. They are: physical and verbal aggression, rejecting behaviors, lax or inconsistent discipline strategies, low levels of parental warmth and affection, low levels of helping and rewarding, and high levels of disapproving and punishing.

The beginnings of the Nurturing Program were rooted in similar observations and studies, though the emphasis was more on noting incidence of abuse and neglect, rather than child behavior problems. Abuse and neglect can take physical, verbal and emotional forms. “In 1979, the National Institute of Mental Health, funded a 2-year national project to develop and research a family-centered parenting program to help curb the serious and growing problem of child abuse

and neglect” (Bavolek, 2002, p. 1). The Nurturing Program was developed in direct response to the findings. In order to simplify and classify the known behaviors of abusive parents the researchers, Bavolek and his colleagues “reviewed articles, books, and media programs and interviewed professionals known for their expertise in treating child abuse and neglect” (Bavolek, 2002, p. 3). Four patterns (or constructs) were discovered: 1) Inappropriate parental expectations, 2) Lack of empathy toward children’s needs, 3) Parental value of physical punishment, and 4) Parental Role Reversal. In later years they added a fifth construct: Oppressing children’s will and independence. Like Belsky’s studies, each of the constructs has been validated as reliable predictors of abusive behaviors. If parents have these attitudes, they are significantly more likely to be engaged in abusive or neglectful parenting styles (Bavolek, 2002). If they take the parenting classes, their abusive attitudes decrease and with the attitudes the incidence of abuse also lessens.

#### *Multicultural Issues Arising with Parenting Classes, including the Nurturing Program*

In turning to examine multicultural issues, we are turning to examine the ways in which different people groups respond to parenting programs like the Nurturing Program. Reid, M., Webster-Stratton, C., & Beauchaine, T. (2001) note that “a number of researchers, however, have noted that families do not respond equally to parent training. Individual child and parent characteristics, and environmental factors such as low socio-economic status, are associated with poorer treatment response (e.g., Kazdin, 1995; Sanders, 1992; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1990).” Does the “poorer treatment response” mean that such parents of low socio-economic status are worse than those more well off? Or a more radical interpretation of the data might see this as evidence that the dominant, more powerful members in society (i.e. the wealthy) are imposing their parental values on a different, less powerful culture.

We are pressed up against the question of whether or not a universally acceptable definition of child abuse exists. Or as one paper puts the question: “Are there universal parenting practices that cut across all ethnicities or cultures that result in the same outcomes for children or are there differences based on the contributions of culture?” (Ruiz, S., Roosa, M., & Gonzales, N., 2002, p. 70) Everyone would seemingly agree that killing or seriously maiming a child for misbehavior is wrong. But is spanking acceptable? Any program, like the Nurturing Program, which holds that spanking classifies as abusive behavior, will automatically set itself against certain people groups. For some cultures (and religions), *failure* to spank is a sign of poor parenting. The other four constructs of the Nurturing Program could be exposed to similar criticism. Interestingly, some research shows the same actions by a parent in one culture often have significantly different results as the same action in a different culture. For instance, Ruiz, Roosa and Gonzales (2002) show that certain parental behaviors by European Americans led to a significantly lower self-esteem than the same parental behaviors of Mexican Americans.

The research of Bavolek and other like-minded parenting programs is not blind to the potential charge of their being multi-culturally insensitive. But they would press their argument. While it is true that a practice like spanking usually has strong cultural and religious sanction, they believe their research highlights an important point. Parents who have a strong belief in the use of corporal punishment have statistically significant higher incidence of the types of abuse that most everyone agrees is wrong—i.e. killing or seriously injuring children. By decreasing people’s valuing of things like spanking (and the other constructs they have developed), their research indicates that children are at much less risk of serious injury or death (Bavolek, 2002; Michalcio & Solomon, 2002). They would value protecting and prioritizing the rights of the group they view as having the least power (children) over and against the rights of another

people group (a culture or religious group valuing spanking). They hope to directly challenge cultures to change, knowing they risk being charged with running culturally imperialistic programs. But they attempt to effect change with as sensitive of means as possible. For instance, Bavolek has conversed at length with Christian theologians and developed a pamphlet designed to argue, from within a Christian's own perspective, that spanking children is needless and cruel.

It still remains open to question if the constructs they developed apply with equal force to different cultures. For example, Ruiz, Roosa, and Gonzales (2002) might ask: Is a child at equal risk of serious injury or death at the hands of Mexican American and European American parents who score similarly on a test like the AAPI-2? What if belief in spanking is less dangerous in one culture than another? The work of Bavolek and others has yet to address this issue.

The issue is clearly complex and open to differing interpretation. Regardless of how one views the multicultural sensitivity of the various programs, one aspect is clear: different people groups perform at different rates in these parenting programs. Let us see how this is the case.

#### GENDER

Perhaps most clear in the literature is the differences in parenting attitudes of men and women. In all five of the Nurturing Programs constructs, "males express significantly ( $p < .001$ ) less nurturing parenting attitudes than females" (Bavolek, 2001, p. 4). Interestingly, even though the scores of both men and women improved at significant levels after completing the course (meaning the Nurturing Program works), men were still significantly lower than women in four of the five constructs (Bavolek, 2001, p. 5). In another study, McBride coming to a similar conclusion notes, "Contrary to popular belief, increased levels of father involvement may not always have positive outcomes" (1990, p. 250).

#### RACE/ETHNICITY

The impacts of race and ethnicity on parenting practices are not as clear, though some impacts can be noted. Reid, Webster-Stratton, and Beauchaine noted in their study of the Incredible Years Parenting Program that “differences in treatment response across ethnic groups were few, and did not exceed the number expected by chance” (2002, p. 209). This means that different ethnic groups all improved similar amounts. In the process of validating the Nurturing Program, Bavolek noted similar results: each group studied made statistically significant improvements (2002) at about the same level.

Though levels of improvement are similar, as with men and women, the starting and ending points can be significantly different. The most marked difference discovered was between White and Black parents. Scores on the AAPI-2 were different at statistically significant levels ( $p < .001$ ) during both pre and post testing in all five of the Nurturing Program’s constructs. The differences were less marked, but still clear, between White and Hispanic parents at both the pre and posttest levels. Some differences existed between the values of Black and Hispanic parents and pre and posttest levels, but they were much less significant. Apparently avoiding a potentially touchy issue, Bavolek doesn’t mention who scored higher or lower; he simply notes that differences exist. (Interestingly, he doesn’t shy away from noting which groups scored higher and lower when it comes to gender, education, and economic status.) (Bavolek, 2002).

#### EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC STATUS

Like gender and racial/ethnic background, both education and economic status affect parenting values. Those with less completed education and those who earn less money, both score statistically significantly lower on nurturing scales. (Peterson, J., Hawley, D. 1998; Reid, M., Webster-Stratton, C., & Beauchaine, T., 2001; Bavolek, 2002)

## **Evaluation Design**

My research project will be a process evaluation. Pikes Peak Family Connections has been in existence for years and has well-established goals and objectives for treatment services. It is not in need of the type of comprehensive, introductory study afforded by a formative evaluation. For internal and external accountability and learning purposes, the 'process' needs examination—to “provide feedback on the quality of the ongoing intervention method” (Gissendanner-Borwick, 2003, class notes). They need someone to “provide the data necessary to judge the intensity and reliability with which services were delivered” (Royse, D., Thyer, B., Padgett, D., Logan, T., 2001, p. 116). As with typical process evaluations, my sources of information will “rely heavily on data normally captured at agencies (Royse, et. al. 2001, p. 117). In this case, I will examine two documents found in each case file: 1) The Family Social History Questionnaire, which provides information on race, gender, and educational status (nominal level data), and 2) The pre and post test AAPI-2 scores. It provides interval level data as the test uses Likert scaling to combine different concepts to create an overall score for each of the five constructs. The purpose of the research will be to understand if the agency is meeting it's goals of improving AAPI-2 scores in a fashion that sees positive results with different types of people (i.e. with multicultural sensitivity).

The establishment of baseline, pre-intervention data will come from the AAPI-2 scores of parents before taking the class. A 'multiple-baseline design' is described as a “single-case experiment design in which the effect of a treatment is demonstrated by showing that behaviors in more than one baseline change as a consequence of the introduction of a treatment: multiple baselines are established for different individuals, for different behaviors in the same individual, or for the same individual in different situations” (Gissendanner-Borwick, 2003, class notes). In

case of my study, multiple baselines will be established in two of these senses—for different individuals, and for different behaviors (or in this case different *attitudes* about parenting).

Will the study include a sufficient sample size? My study will not need to test for random assignment as I plan on inputting the entirety of those who completed the program. In other words, the sample will be sufficient because it will include everyone. I will need to study the entirety in order to assure that my results will be valid for the individual class facilitators. I anticipate that each facilitator will have 40 to 60 individuals who completed their classes in 2002. As there are four facilitators, this means inputting 160 to 240 clients for studying the entire program.

Will I use a control group? This will not be possible. My test will have a one-group pre-test, post-test design (A-B-A), instead of the more highly valid classic experimental design. The classical design follows the same format, but it includes a control group who receive no intervention. The control group allows one to guard against many threats to internal validity (like the fact that the change took place due to something like a major media campaign about good parenting practices). A control group is not possible, as this information was not gathered throughout the year. Pre-tests exist for those who didn't take the Nurturing Parenting Program—those who dropped out before beginning classes. But this population does not take the needed post-test at the end of the time when the program participants are finishing their class. (I will still use this dropout data in order to study patterns of those who don't complete the program.)

Fortunately, as I am chiefly concerned with evaluating a specific program and not in generalizing the findings of the study, the need to follow the classic research design is not even important. And gladly, the study is strengthened by the fact that the AAPI-2 has been in the process of development for thirty years. The test itself is a trustworthy instrument, possessing a



high degree of reliability (consistency and dependability with various groups) and validity (close correspondence to the concept it was designed to measure) (Royse, et. al. 2001, Ch. 11).

### **Means of Data Analysis**

I will begin with a univariate analysis, looking at each of my variable individually (the AAPI-2 pre and post test scores, race, gender, education and completion drop out scores). This will help me “to develop a ‘feel for the data’” so that I can notice any missing gaps or interesting groupings of the results (Royse, et. al, 2001, p. 346). It will be interesting to note and explore the measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), in order to see the overall types of pre and post-test scoring parents were achieving. For instance, what if most parents generally score very poorly on the pre-test, then make statistically significant improvement, but fail to move out of the poor scoring range? Similarly, understanding the standard deviation will be important, as this “provides information about how much scores tend to differ from each other and the mean” (Royse, et. al., 2001, p. 352). It will be a way of further interpreting the importance of the data.

Given that I’m interested in the answer to questions at several levels of complexity, I will need to use bivariate levels of data analysis. I believe that given that my data possesses “*three* groups instead of two *and* interval data”, I will not be able to use t-tests (Royse, et. al. 2001, p. 356). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be the most useful statistical tool in answering my questions: 1) The most basic research question I proposed, whether or not statistically significant change occurred in for 90% of the participants in 3 of the 5 AAPI-2 constructs and 2) The impacts of race, gender and educational status on pre and post test scores and 3) Uncovering any common characteristics in those who dropped out of the program.

### **Time-Line and Budget**

Compiling and preparing the data from the AAPI-2 tests should take between two and three weeks. The process will not be overly time consuming as I will not need to gather any new data, but simply re-organize existing figures. Crunching the number in the computer will take one to two weeks. Analyzing the data and preparing the report should take around one month. I do not anticipate any note-worthy costs associated with the project.

### **Appendix**

See attached worksheets:

- 1) The IRB application.
- 2) The AAPI-2 test. Also included are a Summary Description of the test and 2 worksheets used to score the test.
- 3) The Nurturing Program's Family Social History Questionnaire.

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